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Duxbury Planning

By TOM BROADRICK, AICP

Subdivision approvals by the Planning Board involve a tremendous amount of time and energy from not only the developer's associates but also from Town Hall staff. If we take a look at how many people are involved, I believe you'll see it's a comprehensive process that works well for all parties. Let's say you have a 10-acre parcel of land, you have had a surveyor and engineer report to you that the land appears to be able to be divided into 8 lots with an appropriate cul-de-sac design. Your initial step is to contact the Planning Office, where you speak with staff about how many plans are required, what forms are necessary, what type of fees are needed. Once you have your engineer/surveyor prepare the plans, planning staff can begin the process of "stamping in" your application. This involves assistance from the Town Clerk's office not only upon application but also after approval later on, and during appeals. At the same time the plan is filed with the Planning Board, the Board of Health must be notified, which starts a review process unique to the Board of Health, independent of other boards in Town Hall. Planning staff must legally advertise the public hearing for the subdivision which means making sure abutters are notified according to the latest owners of record as of the current tax year, this involves the Assessing Department. Because the

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Planning Board uses the services of a private consultant to review plans, escrow accounts to pay for the consultant must be set up which requires the services of both the Town Accountant and Town Treasurer, again upon application and later after approval. Remember, no staff have actually "reviewed" the plan yet for compliance, we are just "stamping it in."

Planning staff then set up a DRT meeting, or Development Review Team meeting which consists of appropriate department heads reviewing the plans: the DPW Director, Water Superintendent, Superintendent of Lands and Natural Resources, Highway Safety Committee, Inspectional Services Director, Health Agent, Conservation Administrator, Community Service Officer, Fire Department, and others as appropriate. This review is the initial staff review, we may end up meeting many more times to review "revisions" to the plans.

If wetlands are involved then the Conservation Commission staff must follow similar advertising procedures and a review process unique to that board follows. Easements must be reviewed by Town Counsel and all off-site improvements require further review by the DPW Director and possibly the Board of Selectmen. So you can see that a subdivision plan doesn't just "fly through" but when everything is in place and meets the Rules and Regulations, it can make being a planner a rewarding job.

If you have any questions regarding land-use issues in the town of Duxbury, please don't hesitate to call me at 934-1114.